

Spy Case Prosecutors Are Hoping For More Help From Ames's Wife

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In the first hours after her Feb. 21 arrest, Maria del Rosario Casas Ames seemed to emerge as the government's star witness against her husband. Not only did she tell the FBI that Aldrich Hazen Ames was a spy for the Russians, but she also began describing how he did it, authorities said.

But sometime that afternoon Rosario Ames stopped talking.

If the FBI can get her to cooperate again, it would be powerful ammunition for prosecutors trying to pull together an airtight case against her husband, a 32-year veteran of the CIA. Authorities allege that Aldrich Ames revealed names of U.S.-paid spies, which may have led to at least 10 deaths, and turned over CIA secrets to his Soviet and Russian handlers.

Those familiar with the case—named Nightmover by the FBI—say that his wife's cooperation could increase the pressure on him to start talking too.

Although conviction of Aldrich Ames is the main goal of prosecutors, simply locking him up for the rest of his life would not satisfy one of the primary needs of the government. Authorities want Ames to tell the CIA everything he passed along to Moscow and how it was done in order to determine the losses to U.S. intelligence.

Without his cooperation, it is doubtful the CIA can completely assess the consequences of the alleged espionage, investigators said.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Mark J. Hulkower, who is handling the government's case, declined comment on the status of discussions with Rosario Ames. Her court-appointed lawyer, William B. Cummings, did not return telephone calls yesterday.

Plato Cacheris, who represents

Aldrich Ames, said, "I don't know anything about her arrest." He added that all he's learned is what was said in court.

At a hearing in U.S. District Court in Alexandria on Tuesday, Hulkower seemed to put additional pressure on Rosario Ames to cooperate. He vigorously opposed her bid to be released on bond,



The FBI says Rosario Ames initially cooperated with investigators.

despite Cummings's contention that she desperately wanted to be reunited with her 5-year-old son, Paul. Hulkower said she and her husband were partners in a traitorous venture that netted them at least \$2.5 million.

Ames, 52, and his 41-year-old Colombian-born wife are being held without bond at the Alexandria jail on charges of conspiracy to commit espionage.

"Mrs. Ames knew she was riding on a Russian gravy train, and when she learned of it, she jumped on with both feet," Hulkower said in court. "She did it for the same reason as the evidence establishes Mr. Ames did it—money."

A review of how authorities handled the couple indicates that, from the moment of their arrests, the FBI intended to try to get Rosario Ames to talk. Agents could have arrested the two of them together the morning of Feb. 21, but instead kept them separate.

Aldrich Ames, while in his four-door maroon 1992 Jaguar, was stopped by FBI agents at 10:30 a.m. a few blocks from his house in North Arlington. His wife was arrested at their residence five minutes later.

They were then driven in separate cars to an FBI office in Tysons Corner, where each was photographed and fingerprinted. While there, the FBI, following its

usual practice, tried to interview Ames and his wife separately, according to law enforcement sources.

Aldrich Ames declined to be interviewed and said he wanted a lawyer; Rosario Ames, however, decided to talk with two agents. By 1:50 p.m., Ames was at the Alexandria jail. But his wife did not arrive at the jail until 6:40 p.m.

A clue to what happened in those five hours was provided by Leslie G. Wiser Jr., the FBI supervisor in charge of the probe, who described the interview during testimony at Tuesday's court hearing. Throughout Wiser's testimony, however, Rosario Ames shook her head in disagreement. Her attorney suggested that any statement she made had come under duress because she was worrying about her son's well-being.

According to Wiser's testimony, Rosario Ames initially told the FBI a phony story, saying "the money had come from Mr. Ames helping an unnamed friend from Chicago with investments." But later, for reasons not explained in court, she changed her account and said she would tell the truth, Wiser said.

Rosario Ames told the FBI that she found out about her husband's dealings with Moscow in 1991 when she discovered a piece of paper in his wallet, Wiser testified. She said he told her that he had been "spying on behalf of the Russians," according to Wiser.

She said she understood the espionage activities began in 1985, Wiser said. And she told the agents that he made trips to meet with Russian intelligence officers and that she joined him at least once to leave a signal for the Russians.

According to Wiser, Rosario Ames also said she made bank deposits in the days after her husband would meet with his handlers, all in amounts of less than \$10,000 to avoid federal financial reporting regulations.

She also acknowledged participating in discussions—secretly monitored by the FBI—in which she offered advice and encouragement to Aldrich Ames, Wiser testified. Since that meeting, Rosario Ames has had no face-to-face conversations with the FBI.